

WOMAN AND CASTE IN INDIA

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K. PADMA RAO

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WOMAN AND CASTE IN INDIA

(A Rationalist View)

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P R E F A C E

Caste+Class

Casteism in the bane of Hindu society. Degradation of women, and untouchability are its corollaries. That these evils existed for thousands of years does not prove their validity. It only indicates the stagnation of our society.

In the new context of modern times, people must think and act on the basis of classes and not castes. Only a classless society, can usher in a new man and woman with really human values.

This small pamphlet which is a translation of some chapters of the author's Telugu work in thought provoked. I hope the author will pursue his study and research by going deep into the socio economic conditions which created these evils of our society.

Vijayawada,
9-5-83.

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Y. Balarama Moorthy

Editor

Visalandhra Publications

Women in the Vedic age-A Rationalist view

There are persistent wishes and prayers for the male issue in the Vedas, but there is no aspiration for female Children in the Rigveda. Giving birth to male children in those days was considered to be a symbol of womanhood. The following ric bears it out :-

“యనో అగ్నేమతయే మా వీరతా యైరీరధః”

Yano Agnemateye maa veerataa yaireeradha

(Rigveda : 3-16-5) “O Agni (God of fire) do not make us responsible for being without male issue. Even spells (Mantras) of prayer are replete with longings for male children. For instance,

ఉషస్త మస్యాం యశ సంసువీరం

దాస ప్రవర్గం రయి మశ్వయుద్యం.

Ushastamasyam Yasa Samsuveeram

Dasapravargam rayi maswayudhyam (Rigveda 1-92-8)

O goddess of the dawn, may I get the wealth, of famous, valorous sons and a number of servants’.

They thaught that to earn fame, to augment riches and to do the management of *yagna*, a man is worthier than a woman. Besides this, in that age male offspring was regarded as the main aim of life. The same crawling was expressed when they prayed to goddesses also. Here is an example :

“దేవానాం పత్నీరు శతీర వస్తున !. ప్రావస్తు నస్తు
జయేవా జసాతయే

“Deevanam Patnee rusateera vastunah; pravastu nastu
Jayeva Jesataye” (Rigveda 5-46-7).

May the spouses of gods preserve us for begetting
sturdy sons.

Even in the holy spells at marriage, they wished and
prayed for sons and grandsons, but not for daughters
and grand daughters. It, then, follows that in those
times the female offspring was not given as much impor-
tance as the male issue.

The teachers of Hinduism preach us on the radio
and from public platforms that in the vedic period the
woman enjoyed freedom, wealth and happiness, but
nowadays she has gone bad because of her contact with
the western culture. This investigation exposed her for
it is true. The decay of our culture started with the
Vedic age which appressed the woman, making her
valueless despite her indispensability to society to society
and social advancement. Many a social reformer endea-
voured to salvage it, however its improvement is nominal
or negligible.

Female education in the Vedic age

There are 1028 *Suktas* in the Rigveda, but the
important point is that there were women saints (Rishis)
only in 23 *Suktas*. Among them, there appear nine or
ten women in the Rigveda, who are human and vedan-

tists and the real pontiffs or officiators. Of the Suktas which go by their names. They are; viswavara, Apala, Ghosha, Gcdhee, Lopamudra Saswati, Romasa and so on. Another named 'Vaana' may be included. Apart from it, if we consider the *words* (Slokas) in the Yajurveda, Adharvana. Veda and Brahmanas, it is evident that almost all of them are more suitable for recitation by men than by women.

There are, however, some Rigvedic slokas recited by women. There are some *Mantras* fit for women to chant. It is not correct to say that the study of the Vedas by all women was banned on all occasions. We are given to understand that mainly Gargi and Maitreye took part in the discussion on *Sestras* (Metaphysics). On Gargi's discussion with the sage, Yaagnavalkya, about creation, the latter said, 'O Gargi, ask not questions beyond the pale. If you persist, your head shall break into pieces'. Though Gargi and Maitreyi proved women's right to participate in philosophical disputations, those who availed themselves of this opportunity could hardly come to ten. Besides denying the Common woman the aroma of education, the Vedic man enslaved her. In those days, the women did not have the opportunity to get education at the Gurukulas which were the centres of learning. During her maidenhood only, she could learn with the help of her father or brother at home. Women were given instruction in house-hold duties, but not in logical and scientific disciplines. Woman didnot acquire philosophical and scientific knowledge. Asserting male chauvinism or superiority, they laid down rules unilaterally. Poor women lacked the necessary academic strength to appose the unjust laws and became slaves to men:

THE VEDIC WOMAN-MARRIAGE

It was the time when barbarism was transcended., polygyny was practised, but polyandry was rejected. For instance,

ఉతాహ మస్మి సంజయా పత్యామే శ్లోక ఉత్తమః

(Rigveda 10-159-3)

Utaha masmi Sanjayapatyame sloka uttamah

(I have overcome my co-sisters (other wives of her husband) and so my reputation is excellent in my husband).

There used to be the festival of 'Samana' (a sort of Saturnalia) young men and women participated in this carnival and chose their partners in life.

Some virgins pined in the parental home and became married at long last.

“అమీజ రశ్చిద్ధవధోయువం భగోగః”

(Rigveda 10-399)

Ameejuraschidghava doyuvam bhagogha

(O Aswani gods, you gave a husband to a woman languishing in her parental home by making her beautiful.) This is the story of a woman who married at the age of sixty.

Some remained celibate and led life as vedantists. Maidens were married to yama. (See Sakuntala Rao's 'Women in the Vedic Age. P-44)

It is evident that a man married a number of women. That it was a widely prevalent custom is made clear by the references to the wives vexing and magging their husband. e. g.

సమ్మాత వంతస్పభితస్సీ పత్నీరివ పౌర్షవః

(Rigveda 1-105-8)

Sammata Pantsabhitasseee patneeriva pourmavah

(My ribs torture me (by aching) as wives worry their husband).

We know by the following *rik* that a man had not two or three but fifty wives.

అదాన్మే పౌరుకుత్స్యః పంచాశతం తృ సదస్య

ర్యధూనాం

(Riegveda 8-19-36.)

Adanme Pourukutsyah Panchasatam trasadasyurws dhunam.

(Purukutsa's son Trasadasyu gave me fifty wives.)

However, there was no custom of child marriages. There was complete freedom to choose a life's mate. Both dowery and the practice of paying money to the bride were accepted. As the son was considered essential in all ceremonies and his birth was of great consequence.

Women enjoyed freedom, but they were not so free as Greek women were. In any society the more and easier is the availability of a commodity, the less its value. As

women were galore in that distant past, why should we think otherwise about their worth? Man's need of woman led to the estimation of her value all along in society. Woman came to be treated as an article for sale. Consequently, at one time her prestige rose high; at another it fell low. If a kingdom collapsed once for her sake, she was sacrificed for it at another time. She was placed on the head and trampled upon in different circumstances. Reghteousness was relinquished for her, but contrarily she was abandoned for it. Now she was butchered in the interest of her husband, now her consort was slain to her benefit. It all argues that man's need or lack of it for the commodity of woman fixed her worth in society. On the whole, it appears to us that in the Vedic age women were free to some extent in the matter of marriage.

FEMALE RIGHT TO PROPERTY

The woman in the Vedic period did not seem to have equal right to property. She inherited her father's property provided that she had no brothers. As a woman was unworthy of performing her father's obsequies, her husband took her part. Therefore, it came to light that there was no need for an equal share of property to her. A widow could lay claim to a share of her husband's wealth. Here is an example:

జయేవ వత్స ఉశతీసువాసా

ఉషాహస్రేవ నిరిణీత్ అప్సః :

Jayeva vatsa usateesuvasa

Ushahasreva nereneete apsah.

(Rigveda 1-124-7.)

(As a widow goes to a court of justice to get her property, so the goddess of the dawn is going up the sky.

Women tanned hides, worked with metals and mats. Only a few women earned by doing such services. They were also employed in the royal courts. The main part of their property consisted in the jewels, cash and gifts given by their kith and kin. They always shone in ornaments.

సుసంకాశా మాతృ మృష్టే తయో షా విస్తన్వంకృణుషే
దృశోకమ్

భద్రాత్వము భాషో వితరం పృచ్ఛ నతతై
అన్యో ఉషశోన శస్త్ర.

(O goddess of the dawn! You who glitter like a woman embellished by her mother are making my body bright and convenient to all to look at. Therefore, praised by all, you may dispel darkness.

WOMEN VIS-A-VIS VEDIC RITES

According to the Rigveda, a brotherless maid was called 'putrika'.

(See Sakuntala Rao's Women in Vedic Age p. 4)

As she had no brothers, she was *ipso - facto* granted the right to perform the paternal obsequies. Even after marriage she retained this right.

Both husband and wife together performed the ceremonies of 'Yagna' (a holy sacrifice and 'homa' (a holy burnt offering) Man or woman did not do it singly. e. g.

తిల్వత నేమిధునా

Tilveta Sremidhuna (O Indra, the Couple *is* doing the Yagna to you).

The Vedic woman was entitled to perform religious rites along with her husband and to enjoy the fruit of it. On the whole, she was considered important in the observance of ceremonies at home.

But the Telugu poet Vemana's Pronouncement about the vedic rituals is eternally true.

అలి రంకు తెలుప నఖిల యజ్ఞంబులు

తల్లి రంకు తెలుప తద్దినాలు

కాని తెరువు కర్మకాండ కల్పితమాయె

Aali ranku telupanakhila yagnambulu Talli ranku telupa taddinaalu Kaani teruvu karmakaanda kalpita-maaye [All 'yagnas' [sacrifices] are only to divulge a wife's infedilits; Anniversarees of death are only to reveal a mother's adultery;

But the path of all rites is fictitious and false].

REMARRIAGE

In those days, a deceased man's wife was made to lie beside the corpse and the following *Mantra* (spell) was read :

ఉదీర్ఘ్య నార్య భిజావలోకం. గతానుమే తము

పశేష ఎహి

హస్తాగ్ర భస్మదిధిపోస్తవేదం. ప్రత్యుర్జ నిత్యమభి

సంబభూ భ॥

(O woman, you are lying by your dead husband, get up therefrom and join the living ones; meet the man who is ready to take your hand in marriage, and obtain your wifehood again.

The above sloka makes it clear that the remarrige of widows was an accepted order. Usually the widow married her husband's brother. Apart from this, she was allowed to stay with her sons as a widow. If she was sonless, she could have a conjugal engagement (నియోగ, Niyoga, an established custom) with her husband's brother to get a son.

How free was the Vedic woman? We have learnt from the preceding discussion that the Vedic girls were considered valueless, and were not absolutely free to receive education on an equal footing with the boys. Besides it, they did not have the necessary freedom to resist the Vedic dicta. Women's hearts were compared to wolves hearts e. g.

సాలా వృకాణాం హృదయాన్వేతా

(Rigveda 10-95-15).

Sala Vrikaanaam hridaynveta (women's hearts are sheer wolves' hearts).

They were regarded as uncontrollable and fickle minded. eg.,

స్త్రీణాం శ్వాసం మనః :

(Rigveda 4-33-1).

Streenaru swasam manah (The female minds are uncontrollable) They were declared not amicable.

నవై సై శ్రీణాని సఖ్యానిసన్తి

(Navai strainani sakanisanti—Rigveda 10-95-15).

A barren woman was ordered to be sacrificed to the God. Yama.

యమా యానం

(Yamaa Yaanam)

(Rigveda :)

In Maitrayis collection (3-63) in Adharvanaveda (7-38-4) women were likened to dice and wine. The woman was considered to be a source of sorrow to the human society and a form of the inauspicious daity *Sani* (Goddess of poverty). In those days there was a vow or ceremony called '*Varuna prghasa*'. The rule implicit in this ceremony was only to reveal how faithful the wife was to her husband. She had to throw down as many blades of the holy grass (Darbhas) as her lovers. Only thereafter she was entitled to take part in the observance of the vow.

Then, to celebrate the sacrifice called 'Rajasuya', a stallion was let loose. After its return it was beheaded. After the eldest queen consort of the monarch [was laid beside the Carcass, they were covered with a holy cloth.

But there was also another side. According to some riks women participated in wars, drove chariots and shot arrows. They also learnt painting, music and dance.

C O N C L U S I O N

We have so far seen how much truth there is in the loud assertions on the radio and in papers, that the Indian woman has been given the highest place since the Vedic times. In the Vedic Age the women were without value and education. As part of regular propoganda, the Vedic luminaries among the fair sex "Viswavara, Apala, Ghosha, Ghodha, Lopamudra' Romaka,, and so on were often cited to prove their high Status and respectability and to cavil at the seeming degradation of our women folk in these days.

Education enlightens women, and enlightenment leads to their liberation. The educated woman asserts herself, and her individuality makes her abandon the cult of personality, that is to say, she will rebel against her master's (husband's) tyranny or despotism. This will be a treacherous stab in the back of the Indian culture. The sum total of the culture of Bharat rests upon the wife's subservience to the husband. Keeping the woman away from the light of the education our Vedic saints have delineated her as an object of pleasure, a spineless puppet and a drudge.

The Rigveda was the earliest of all. I have cited more examples from it. It is sensible to say that the woman in the Vedas was better (from the view point of freedom) than in the Manusmriti, but to aver that the woman had an honoured place in the Vedas does not hold good. when the birth of a female baby was not wished for and valued, how could the woman have a high status ?

But a worse thing happened in the laws of Manu and parasara and in the doctrines of Goutama; the woman was relegated to the bottomless pit. The punishment and fetters dealt to our women by the Hindu preceptors have been brought to light one by one through renascent cultural movements or other methods. Many a feminist reformer risked his life in order to bring about the female deliverance.

Lokayats and Buddhists fought for women's emancipation. In the modern age, besides great humanist, socialist and communist movements, illustrious iconoclasts, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, through his Brahmo Samaj, Dayananda Saraswati through his Arya Samaj, Kesab chandra Sen, *Sarat*, Dr. Lohia, Veeresalingam and Chalam strove hard to break the chains of women's mental servitude to a great extent. The Indian woman got delivered from the child marriage and the 'sati' but she could not get rid of some pernicious dogmas of Hinduism. Customs and castes, lineage and ritual have not yet left her. As long as she gets stuck up in the slough of vile ideas, there can not be total cultural renaissance in the world of women except some changes of convenience in nuptial ceremonies and fashions. Until the total revolution in the social, and cultural field does not come about,

yesterday's religious courtesan as today's prostitute, bygone slavery as present subservience, and defunct Sati' as live conflagration of poverty can all but dog women and society too. Therefore it necessitates the cultural renaissance movement even today.

Note :- This is a chapter in the author's unpublished book, 'Bharatadesamulo Stree' (Woman in India). He thanks his friend Dhulipalla Sitaramamurthy, who helped him in the prebaration of this chapter which was published in the first issue of the Telugu Monthly 'HETUVAADAM', May 1980.



AFFRONTING ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN

Manu, the ancient law-giver of Hindus, has curbed women's independence and progress. Here is a sacred edict of his, an oft-quoted half truth :—

పితారక్షత కౌమారే : భర్తా రక్షితీయావనే :

రక్షంతి స్థావిరే పుత్రా : నస్త్రీ స్వాతంత్ర్య వర్హతి.

“Pitarakshati Koumare; bhartarakshati youvane;

Rakshati Stavireputra; na stree swatantryamarhati.”

(Protected by father in childhood, by husband in youth, and by sons in old age, woman does not deserve freedom.)

Such inhibitory injunctions proclaiming women to be entirely dependent have passed into proverbs dancing on the tongues of even ordinary people. These ideas which have got deep-rooted in men's hearts do even today gush out of their mouths as carping remarks about women. Therefore, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia concludes that men are very mean and cruel towards women. The law-making sages of antiquity ordered that women be kept enslaved within the four walls without education and worldly wisdom. Their rules and commands as adages, epigrams and idiomatic expressions are still popular. An examination of these sententious expressions and poetic utterances reveals how strong the attitude of hurling affronts at our women is in our culture. Take, for instance, a Telugu saying which confirms the conclusion above :

అడది తిరిగి చెడును. మగాడు తిరగక చెడును.

"Adadi tirigi chedunu, magadu tiragaka chedunu."

(A travelled woman and an untravelled man become bad.)

Moreover, Manu says, 'Husbands and other men must keep women under control and make them so dependent in their custody as to be able to find no pleasure.'

In tune with it, such Telugu and Sanskrit adages as.

ఆడదాని బుద్ధి అపర బుద్ధి.

“Adadani buddhi apara buddhi.”

(Woman's mind is utterly bad)

and

స్త్రీ బుద్ధి ప్రళయంతకః

“Stree buddhi pralayantakah.”

(Woman's desire is calamitous), have gained currency. Many an indecent proverb about women is in fashion. The following couplet was made by those who carped at child-marriage and widow marriage :—

తెగించినదానికి తెడ్డే లింగం

విడిచినదానికి వీరేశలింగం.

“Teginchina daniki tedde lingam;

Vidichina daniki Veeresalingam.”

[To an audacious woman the ladle is a lingam (Phallus or penis)

(To a lecherous widow the paramour is Veeresalingam.) Hindu obscurantists threw fiery bits of false scandals at Sri Kandukuri Veeresalingam, a prominent Brahmo Samajist and a practical advocate of widow marriages, especially child - widow marriage. Though widow marriages have of late become an honoured custom these out-moded ideas about women have not forsaken our minds; on the contrary, they still control and condition our minds. It is stranger still when a woman quotes these offensive lines with reference to another of her kind.

To cremate the dead-wood of senseless customs impeding women, there were movements for social reform. But today women devote themselves to *Bhajans* (chanting hymns) and get themselves ensnared in old customs and superstitions. They ought to give up these *bhajans* and go into the real world to make an end of the humiliating proverbs and atrocities against them.

Still worse, there has been a propaganda that ladies are liars. Women have been castigated with standers and satires that they are not trustworthy because they tell credible lies. As a result, there is a popular belief that uttering falsehoods results in the birth of female babies. Here is another insulting pithy expression more prevalent in villages, which accords women superiority over men in uttering lies :—

ఆడది బొంకితే గోడ పెట్టినట్లు

మగాడు బొంకితే తడిక పెట్టినట్లు.

“Adadi bonkite goda bettinatlu;

Magadu bonkite tadika bettinatlu.”

[A women's uttering a lie is like a stone wall;

A man's telling lies is like a bamboo lattice.]

This saying may be the result of one of Vemana's verses. For example :—

ఆడదాని బొంకు గోడబెట్టినయట్లు
పురుషవరుని బొంకు పూరి తడిక
స్త్రీల నేర్పు మగల చీకాకు పరచురా.

"Adadani bonku Goda bettinayatlu,
Purushavaruni bonku puritadaka;
Streela nerpu magala cheekaku parachura."

from **VEMANA PADYA RATNAKARAM**
(P. 601.)

[A woman's lie is like a stone wall;
A man's lie is a bamboo lattice;
Women's skill worries husbands.]

Vemana's presentation of an embodiment of ambrosia as an idol of falsehoods is full of prejudice.

Vemana, an ardent social revolutionary of the first water, speaks with his tongue in his cheek about women.

ఆడుదనగా రోత, యది చూడగ రోత
తలచి చూడగ తనకు తానే రోత
ఎంతవారికైన యింతియే బల్ఘాతే.

"Adudanaga rota, yadichoodaga rota
Talachichooda tanaku tane rota
Entavarikaina intiya balghata."

(3)

from VEMANA PADYA RATNAKARAM
(P. 234.)

(Woman is abominable, 'it' is repulsive to look at;
After all, she is detestable to herself;
To men, however great, only woman is a mortal
blow.)

This scornful jeering at women goes to prove our social reformers' attitude towards them in the past. Moreover, the following verse which holds woman responsible for a lustful desire in men is sample of Vemans, intolerance of the fair sex.

ఆడదానిజూడ, అర్థంబుజూడగ
బామ్మకయిన బుట్టు రిమ్మ తెగులు
బ్రహ్మయాలి త్రాడు బండి రేవున తెల్లంప.

"Adudanijuda, arthambujudaga
Bammakaina buttu rimma tegulu
Brahmayali tradu bandirevuna trempa."

(On seeing woman and money even in Brahma rises the malady of madness. May Brahma's wife's nuptial thread be broken at the big ford of the village tank, i. e., may Brahma die!)

The saint-poet Veman portrays woman as a bewitching beauty and vamp. It is abhorrent that he blames leachery on women as if men were innocent and spotless. How could Vemana or any other sage find women alone blame-worthy in any immoral act?

Vemana could not view women sympathetically and rationally. It is shocking that a modern critic supports Vemana's attitude towards women.

In the case of women, Vemana appears to be a scornful poet. This tendency is to be condemned.

Another Telugu poet, Kavisarvabhauma, Sreenatha, pokes fun at unfortunate women bereft of their partners in life and blesses them ironically and indecently.

మిండ ముండకు సంపత్ సిద్ధిరస్తు
 పరచు తెంపికి నిత్య భాగ్యమస్తు
 వదరు బోడికి నీప్సితాన్ ప్రాప్తిరస్తు
 బలు వితంతుకు మైథున ప్రాప్తిరస్తు.

"Mindamundaku sampats siddirastu,
 Parachu tempiki nitya Bhagyamastu,
 Vudarubodiki neepsitan Praptirastu,
 Balu Vitantuku maithuna praptirastu."

Form TELUGULO TITTU KAVITWAM

(P. 130.)

(May the harlot widow prosper!

May the hireable widow thrive day by day!

May the talkative widow get her desires gratified!

May the lusty widow have bed-pleasure!

He composed several such cetchy stanzas, pouring ridicule on women. They are still powerful in the popular idiom. It will be neuseating to quote Sreenatha's and Tenali Ramalinga's Poems which disperage women.

It is a shameful thing that even today we utter such unreasonable proverbs as: ఆడదాని మాట నీటి మూట : "Adadani mata neeti muta" (A woman's word is a bundle of water), and

ఆడదాని బ్రతుకు అనాథ బ్రతుకు.

"Adadani bratuku anatha bratuku."

(A woman's life is a propless one.) Therefore, Dr. Lohia's words are true: "Being unable to withstand wickedness in society daily two or three women set fire to themselves on the average in Gujarat". But they do not incinerate this cruel society!

In spite of disgraces and a great deal of mockery, womankind has learnt to have long-suffering, but she has not learnt to resist the world. As Chalam says: "The object of rebellion is that it needs no rebellion", and as Tagore opines: "The end of a storm is peace." Hence, it is necessary that social drawbacks and foibles (in the body politic) should be corrected through struggles and movements in order to establish a society free from exploitation. Women had better gird up their loins to put an end to the insults heaped and atrocities perpetrated on them from all walks of

life than await the advent of great social reformers for their emancipation. Therefore, Sarat's keen observation that if women enjoy high status and prestige in any country, it is due to their self effort, is true.

Even today there are nude wall pictures, half or all but nude figures in commercial advertisements and film magazines parading the sexy photos of actresses. Cinewriters have made their own contribution by composing lyrics with quibbles and quips shaming women. Yet, women do not raise their voice at these shameful things, which goes to prove their indifference and submissive nature. They must destroy the attitudes that belittle them in any manner—esthetic, cultural or commercial. On the whole, they have resisted child marriages and widow marriages. Having acquired the wealth of higher education, they are marching forward by breaking the shackles of superstitious customs one by one. It is these enlightened, brave women that should revolt against the proverbs, idiomatic expressions, verses in bad taste, made pictures or paintings which humiliate them. Let us hope that all women's movements will burn to ashes despicable, inhuman trends in the flames of their angry hearts, and work for ushering in a new society where equal respect and opportunities for all prevail unhindered on any ground.



CASTE AND ITS ORIGINS

In our country caste has become [not only an integral part of national life, but also a mental malady. It may be proclaimed that there is no Indian but has a caste stamp. All castes have evolved a peculiar style of life of their own. This diversity has dragged the Indians out of the broad national path into the narrow blind alley of caste. This is the reason why even the progressive revolutions are not free from the stigma of casteism. It follows that the social organization in India has stood upon the foundation of the caste system, and especially this settled, steely foundation in villages has not been shaken by any revolutionary movement. Knowing it full well, Dr. Ambedkar says,

"There is no doubt, in my opinion, that unless you change your social order you can achieve little by way of progress. You cannot build anything on the foundations of caste. You cannot build up a nation, you cannot build up morality".

(—from "Annihilation of Caste" P. 82)

The Hindu culture which converted the Bharateeya (Indian) mode of life into the caste system and Hinduism which has nurtured it, have the folly of casteism as their residual riches today.

Hinduism did its level best and displayed its design mode of life into the caste system and Hinduism which has nurtured it, have the folly of casteism as their residual riches today.

Hinduism did its level best and displayed its design only to nourish the caste. The books that teach the doctrines of Hinduism preach the duties of caste more. Finally, even the metrical syllables in prosody have suffered from it. The Puranas (mythologies) which came to propagate the tenets of Hinduism, have inculcated the caste culture on the nation. In the Ramayana, another name for mercy, another name for mercy, Sambuka was slain on the pretext of caste.

In the name of caste itself, the priestly class monopolized education for thousands of years and debilitated the whole nation. By the professional education (Kula Vidya) itself, this class pretended to possess supernatural and invincible magical powers, gained control over society, oppressed other castes and stood in the way of scientific progress like a stone wall.

Historically speaking, the discovery of iron led to agricultural progress, which helped the nomadic races to have a settled life.

In the settled society a number of callings came into existence. In course of time, each calling became a fixed caste. Though these professions passed for studies, they lost academic honour. These occupational castes became fixed by birth. But, occupations have changed, and castes have not.

Except the Veda-recitors, the people of other trades were not recognised as learned ones. Going by the name of 'Sudras' they were reckoned as serfs. This tradition still continues.

Therefore, sudras (the fourth caste) were considered unworthy to study the Veda. If anyone studied it, he was beheaded. Sambuka (in the Ramayana) was slain in this way.

Acharya Drona in the Mahabharata destroyed the opulence of Ekalavya's matchless skill in archery in view of his unworthiness because of his low caste. However, though he was a noble Brahmin in accordance with the Holy scriptures, he sold out his punditry for livelihood. It is difficult to comprehend why he raised the topic of righteous scruple to train Ekalavya in archery while no such scruples prevented him from teaching the clanless and casteless Pandavas. These mythological tales have been preached and interpreted by different preceptors so as to influence society to observe casteism since the legendary heroes themselves could not escape from the duties of caste.

Lord Krishna who ordained Gita as the bounden duty of mankind, was challenged in the name of caste by Sisupala at the time of Raja Sooya (a royal sacrifice.)

Karna faced many a trouble simply because he was brought up by a Soota (carpenter) caste man. But Vyasa

who preached casteism did not seem to have the purity of caste. He was born to the hermit, Paraasara and a fisherwoman. Paraasara himself had been born to Sakti and a low caste woman, Adrusyanti. Sakti had been born to the noble saint Vasishtha and an untouchable woman, Arundhati. What does the genealogy of these sages indicate? Men were saints and their women, untouchables. Though all these may be incredible legendary heroes, it is they who made an indelible mark on the hearts of Indians. In this context we may have to note an important point: the male children of these couples became honourable and noble while the female issue remained nameless and ignoble.

Men made use of women for the purpose of offspring only. If a female child was born, did they not abandon it? Was not Sakuntala left to herself by the sage, Viswaamitra and Menaka?

This consciousness of clan and caste laid the foundation for different modes of life. Aryans, Kushans, Huns, Parsees, Arabs, Turks and a number of others invaded, and settled down in India. It has made the racial and linguistic differences conspicuous. There have come into existence 280 languages and 500 dialects.

The Aryans and Arya saints were solely responsible for the nurture and perpetuation of this clan, race and caste mentality in India. Some historians think that the Aryans destroyed the excellent Indus valley civilization.

(Excerpts from the Introduction to the author's Telugu book "Kulam — Punaadulu" (Caste and its Foundations.)



Walls of caste associations prevent unity of the suppressed

By K. PADMA RAO

E V I L S O F C A S T E S Y S T E M

For ages, mental slavery engendered by the caste system has got entrenched in India. Our deviation from the object of knitting ourselves into a strong, monolithic nation is only due to the unwholesome influence of castes. Today the Indian Nation is divided into hundreds and thousands of caste organisations. Belittling humanism and human spirit, it is going on increasing its caste-consciousness. In the name of Indian Culture, the evil practice of caste system continues to have a firm hold on the hearts of people. The so called democratic freedom, today passes for the supremacy of casteism.

Involved in the internal caste-conflicts for thousands of years, our country was easily subjugated by foreigners. Even the sense of slavery or subordination is being nurtured in the name of caste groups by those who aspire to leader-

ship in political, social and cultural fields. These caste organisations are only betraying the poor of these castes. They hinder not only National integrity but also the unity of the down-trodden people, as partition-walls.

The pitiable dupes who were branded 'Harijans' historically and indelibly by Gandhijee have several caste associations, viz., Harijan, Adi-Andhra, Adi-Christava Sanghas that exist in Andhra Pradesh. Some who have risen in life by getting jobs and political positions by virtue of reservations, have formed them with ulterior motives. Ninety per cent of these low castes not only lack food and clothes' but they are still strangers to modern civilization and culture, as if living in an uncivilised age. The enlightened few have not led any agitations to better the lot of their poor brethern. On the contrary, with their hearts replete with the stink of casteism, they go on rousing caste-feelings, and thus make the caste subserve them. The latest shoot of 'Madiga' association proves it.

If 'Malas' and 'Madigas' who suffered slavery as untouchables in history from separate caste associations and are eager to become political agents, ridiculing each other, how does the question of upper castes fraternizing them arise ?

The history of Indian Churches reveals that even in Christianity 'Malas' belong to the Luthern Mission while 'Madigas' embrace the Baptist Mission for their sustenance. These working classes are ignorant of this scheme, which has orginated in those who seek to take advantage of the caste in the name of these toilers.

Though born in the low castes suppressed for ages, and victimized by social inequality and utter poverty, some have been able to get education under the brand of weaker sections and to climb one or two rungs up the ladder of wealth, but they have forgotten these depressed classes. Moreover, devoid of either social awakening or progressive national outlook, they are cheating and exploiting the oppressed who have made them their heirs to political power, and they are the enemy number one of these down-trodden masses.

THE ROLE AND FALL OF BRAHMINISM.

Apart from this, the associations of Brahmins are making a plea for equal opportunities along with the untouchables excommunicated for ages. Except a few Brahmins serving such big temples as Tirupati Balaji's, a large number of them are extremely poor. They still persist in out-dated customs, practices and profession and bestow poverty on their progeny.

Sub-sects of Brahmins—Vaidiks and Niyogis—have separate caste associations promoting caste-consciousness and spirit though they declare from the pulpit of 'Viswa Hindu Parishat', 'We are all one nation,. Many of them live as undertakers, don't they? Are there not many who remain unmarried and suffer from caste inhibitions?

They practise untouchability among themselves. Vaidiks and Niyogis still treat Nambis and Tambis (Priests) as untouchables. How can these Brahmins who enter a temple with traditional honour and

formality, decline holy water and prasadam on the ground that they are offered by a Nambi or a Tambi' take religion to the depressed people? The aim of their life is compassion in theory and contempt in practice. As all others have caste associations, if Brahmins wish to have their own, they are equal to the common; how are they superior to all others?

REDDIES AND KAMMAS HAVE CAPTURED P O W E R

while these people have been engaged in bickerings, Reddies and Kammas have sown the seed of inner conflicts in them and gained political ascendancy since Independence. and forming the caste organisations of their own, they have been endeavouring to have a tight grip on the political power. Quite a few educational institutions are managed by them. Since Independence, almost only these two castes have ruled the State. There is always friction between the two, however there is mutual understanding about holding the reins of power. Although they have enjoyed power for such a long time, it has not benefited the poor who form the majority in these castes as well. They are not in a position to perform the marriages of their daughters, nor can they afford to educate their children by offering enormous donations in competition with the rich. prevented by caste-prestige from giving vent to their wants and troubles, many a needy family boils in the cauldron of poverty.

CASTEISM VITIATES EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Adding to this, caste feelings reign supreme in the institutions of higher learning and hostels. Inciting caste-mania in youths, political leaders are making use of them for their selfish ends. Caste is permeating youth associations and fanning the flame of conflicts which are on the increase day-by-day.

THE STRENGTH OF CASTE IN ELECTIONS

The strength of caste predominates in the selection of a candidate in elections. Only with this caste strength, new political aspirants are hunting for power. Concealing the Venom of casteism in the throat, they are making a rain of promises outwardly.

Instigated by power-mongers, Kapu, Belija, Ontari and Telaga castes have knit themselves into a union when the elections to the State Assembly are round the corner. The reason behind all this is 'no doubt' to parade their combined strength and bargain for seats.

Rajak Sangh is by now too old to provide the hard-working poor washermen even with lime or soda needed.

The leaders of weavers have waxed rich enough while the poor weaver at the loom-pit has not benefited in any manner.

Even the associations of Nai Brahmins. Agnikula, Vysyas Kshatriyas, Mahendras (basket-makers), Yadavas, Erukalas, Yanadis, Gangaputras (Fishermen), Gaudas and so on follow suit.

It is now crystal-clear that the leaders of all caste organisations are wealthy people, and only they are the exploiters of the whole society. The poor of all castes are the same. These associations based on the caste cannot eradicate their age-old poverty and social slavery.

Emerging out of the rotten rut of castes, the oppressed the suppressed, the toilers who have to work day and night to make both ends meet, those who are pinched with halfsatisfied hunger, those who sell their bodies to fill their bellies, -why to name this or that one?—and all the victims of exploitation should unite in order to strike at the root of the exploitation-oriented system and the caste culture. Caste associations benefit only exploiters, not the poor and human beings at large. The so-called caste was not born with a man, it was the cunning creation of exploiting classes. The oppressed and exploited masses should realise that the 'Caste, helps the rich and political go-betweens, and fight for equality in Political, economic and cultural fields. They should work for the establishment of socialist society. Let all movements—revolutionary, progressive, social and cultural—come together in this respect, to continue their fight unitedly. Therefore, we demand

1. All caste associations be banned.
2. The filth of casteism be cleaned.
3. Caste system be eradicated.
4. Casteless human society prevail.

Translated by
TATHAGATUDU.



BUDDHISM - - A SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Buddhism is the greatest movement that opposed Brahminism and strove to establish a new (ideological) culture of its own in India.

The pristine Vedic religion gradually made for Brahminism which in turn gave rise to Hinduism. Now Buddhism came into being. It was necessitated because Brahminism brought about inequality, authoritarianism and the division of society into diverse classes. Buddhism resisted all these. Therefore as Dr. Ambedkar says,

“The rise of Buddhism was as significant as the French revolution.”

In fact the 6th Century B. C. had a Significance in the history of the world. In all the important centres of the civilisations of that period, social and spiritual restlessness occurred. Dissatisfaction with old values, beliefs, practices and institutions grew apace. The individual and society, the individual and the State, the mutual responsibilities of the individual and the State, mundane morality and celestial bleiss and other important points were discussed and debated. As a result of it there was a search for new, progressive values. Such philosophers as Socrates in Greece, Zoroaster in Persia and Confucius in China flourished then.

The Buddha was born C. 563 B. C. to King Suddhodana of 'Sakya, Clan and the Queen consort Mayadevi at Lumbinivana near the city of Kapilavastu. He studied the Scriptures critically and thought about the world with pity. To find out the root-cause of sorrow in this world and the remedy, he left his wife, son and Kingdom.

Ultimately the truth dawned on him, and this discovery caused him to conclude that desire is the cause of sorrow in this world, and to realise that no super power was responsible for the earthly drawbacks. He also became aware of the fact that there is neither God nor Spirit over and above Nature. Moreover, he explained the System of the Upanishadic thought and propounded a doctrine helpful to solve the contemporary problems, and a philosophy as a basis of that doctrine. Therefore; Dr. S Radhakrishnan remarks 'The Buddha is a man, not God, a teacher and not a Saviour.'

This preceptor vehemently opposed the caste system which Brahminism had beaten into the Indians. He denounced the Vedic rituals. He deprecated priesthood and Brahman superiority, but he thought high of humanism. He loudly proclaimed the oneness of all human beings in this country. His sacrificing nature, his pity for all creatures, his insistence on the welfare of all people, his extraordinary knowledge and his preaching ability helped lead men from the caste culture into the human culture. He tried to banish the Hindu culture which encouraged and nurtured exploitation and indigence by a peculiar style of living.

Destroying the difference between sovereign and subject, master and man (servant), Buddhism taught

fighting to the miserable man smarting under priestly cruelty and social, economic exploitation. It was a peaceful struggle, however there were flames within. It is no ordinary task to venture to resist Brahman culture, a hotbed of terrific cobras. It was a great revolution. It was a humanist 'Yagna' for washing out the sediment of exploitative, as well as servile mentality and for knitting all men together.

The tawny robes of the Buddhist mendicants were really steely armour. It might be the begging bowl in their hands, however it was the cornucopia which tried to usher in a new mode of existence by eradicating the beggary of the clergy representing the old culture. In the simplicity of the Bhikkhus, there lay seriousness, majesty, and reformative zeal to cleanse the stink of old ideas.

The right speech, right action, right living, right toil, right thought, right meditation, right determination and right vision—the eight-fold path, a code of conduct in the Buddha's wheel of righteousness—became powerful magical weapons to better and shatter the venomous tree of the caste system and struggled to set up new monasteries of humanism.

Therefore, it was the popular movement which stirred the people. Blaming anarchy and enhancing human values, it made the people's awareness incandescent which wafted the perfume of humanism. Mainly, it stood against the nasty, wicked principle that only the people of the

upper castes, and none else, were entitled to education, charity and honour. It proclaimed and upheld the equality of the people of all occupations. It preached spirituality to the people living away from theology, without the distinctions of royalty and the rabble.

In the violent Yagnas such as Agnishthoma, *Aswamedha, Rajasuya, Narmedha, *Vaajapeya, Poutrani, Mahavarata, *Poundareeka, Sarvamedha and Sarvasaara, human beings, goats and horses were killed; food - grains were burnt. Fat and coagulated blood were fried in ghee and eaten with gusto. By such acts, the clergy went to Heaven to have a good time with the divine courtesan, Rambha. Condemning all these cruel rituals, Buddhist stir hoisted the flag of non-violence.

*ASWAMEDHA : Yajamaana Pramadaa Vikaswara bhaga
Nyastaaswa deerghasmara
Dhwajadandambagu naswamedha
makhatam
Trambun nireekshinchun.

—Mahakavi Sreenadha's metrical
poem in highly Sanskritised Telugu.

Yajamaana = the sacrificer, performer of Yagna.
Pramadaa = wife's. Vikaswara = fully opened.
Bhaga = (in) the vagina; Nyasta = inserted.
aswa = (of) the horse; deergha = long.
Smaradhwajadandambu = (having) cupid's flag-staff
(i. e., its copulatory member).

Aaswamedha = Aswamedha. makha = (of) the sacrifice
tantrambun = ritual; nireekshinchuchun = seeing, catching
ights of.

In violence and bloodshed the priests followed the path of vultures. They denounced Sudras as unworthy of priestcraft, despite living on their labour. The foundations of caste system lay in these rituals. It was postulated and preached that Brahma created men with different traits,

It means :- Catching sight of the sacrificer's wife's widely opened vagina having the sacrificial horse's long copulatory organ inserted.

Sreerama (Rama) in the Ramayana, Janamejaya and Dharmaraja in the Mahabharata performed this Aswamedha yagna very devoutly.

—from Taapee Dharma Rao's book :
 "Devaalayaalameeda Bootu Bommalu"
 (Pornographic Images on Temples, Page 88)

*VAAJAPEYA is a sacrifice in which a stallion was slain.

*POUNDAREEKA is a yagna which includes the public sexual intercourse indulged in on a pandal by the couple performing the sacrifice. Is there any other animality and barbarity worse than this? You may well consider to which stage of the evolutionary culture of humanity such people belonged when they religiously believed that this kind of yagna would take them alive to Heaven.

that the providence (Brahma) himself inscribed a life of servitude on the foreheads of Sudras and that what with the good acts of the previous birth, Brahmans were born with spiritual knowledge. And thus, by the imposition of fatalism (theory of 'Karma') on the caste system, the steely foundations for caste organisations were laid. The policy of the torture of one man by another, and of the exploitation of one caste by another, was legalised.

To break these strong bases, the Buddha turned the people's attention from the expensive, troublesome, sacrificial religion towards the spiritual reform of the individual. He preached that the aim of religion must be individual and social morality but not earthly and other worldly delights. Many a Buddhist teacher strove to implant these tenets in the minds of people. They included such luminaries as Aswaghosha, Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, Asanga, Bhaavaviveka, Dingnaga, Chandrakeerthi. (There is a sizable critical opinion that these philosophers are responsible for the final merger of Buddhism with Hinduism.) We may thereby understand that only Buddhism activated the stagnant philosophic thought in the world.

During the historical evolution, Buddhism amassed the national wealth of excellent statuary and painting in order to spread this new culture. If Hinduism was propagated through the Vedas, Darsanas, Upanishads, Brahmanas,

Aranyakas and Puranas, Buddhism made use of the opulence of sculpture. The Buddhists created a wonderland of statues and paintings at Karly, Nasik, Bhaja, Ajanta caves in Maharashtra, in God and Karnataka, at Kanchi, Nagapatnam in Timil Nadu at Nagarjuna Hills, Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh and at Barhat and Sanchi in Uttar Pradesh, and occupied a high place in the minds of Indians. Nalanda, Taxila (Takshasila), Varanasi (Benares,) Vaisali, Sravasti, Kapilavastu, and so on became centres of Buddhist culture. In those days Hinduism remained dormant.

Moreover, in opposition to the Gurukula style of education monopolised by the higher castes, Buddhist Universities were founded.

The caste penetrated into every doctrine that tried to improve Hinduism in this country. Contrary to this inevitability, Buddhism preserved its self from the defilement of the caste system. Therefore, the Hinduism, revived by Sankaracharya's philosophy, employed, all its skill and strategem to banish Buddhism from this country.

The ancient Buddhist monasteries have remained mere mounds, or they have come to be called where mounds at some places in Andhra Pradesh, Hence,

THE FIVE RAZED STUPAS

The blood-streaks on the necks cut with swords sharp have not yet dried up.

The trickery of the crooked hands which beheaded the Buddhist pylons and turned them into Siva's phallus is still pellucid.

If the nooses round the necks of gasping Truths in the womb of History opened, the lamps of gore for today's religiosity of Andhras visible are the five Aaraamaas the living tombs of yesterday's holy Buddhist centres where the fragrant flowers of Buddhist principles bloomed.

Illuminating people's culture are the ruined sculptural rostra of a Buddhist art:

May this ravine of veracity flow, breathing hot flame's!

'Garbha Gudi' (*Sanctum Sanctorium*) one of the author's unpublished free verses.)

In fact, history declares how Hinduism tried tooth and nail to trample down Buddhism. The discoveries made by the famous research scholar and historian, Sri M. Soma-sekhara Sarma, and the ex - archaeological Director, Sri Ramesh, have revealed, 'The temple for Amareswara was constructed upon the Buddhist stupa in Amaravati (on the right bank of the river Krishna in Guntur District).' In

an interview published in *Andhra Jyoti* a Telugu on October 8, 1980 about Amaravati Dr. B.S.L. Hanumantha Rao said, 'During the millennium between 300 B. C. and A. D. 700 Buddhism flourished. The ancient Buddhist elics will come to light modern excavations.'

Historians think that 'Kaalamukhs', a saivite sect, who spread apace in 7th and 8th centuries. started the organisation, 'Simha parishat' (Lions' Council) and annihilated Buddhism, Buddhist sculpture, literature, monasteries and treasures of of Buddhist art.

Whatever occurred, it is clear that the violence and arrogance of Hinduism extirpated Buddhism by force. Although such things are the signs of religious intolerance in India, it is often tomtomed that the Hinduism is the veritable name for tolerance.

In fine, the very symbol of the tolerance of Hinduism is the disappearance of Buddhism from Bharat.

(—It is a chapter in the author's book in Telugu "Kulam—punaadulu") (Caste and its Foundations.)

ANDHRA PRADESH RATIONALISTS STAGE DHARNA.

At the All India Radio Station, Vijayawada
on 13th March, 1983, Sunday.

Sir,

We, the members and supporters of A. P. Rationalist Association, are going to protest against the undesirable use of A. I. R. to bring about religions revivalism, blind beliefs and unscientific ideas. Here are a few points showing how this mass medium is misused and abused,

All just people will agree that in a secular state if the government permits religious propaganda on the radio on purpose, it is violative of the constitution. Broadcasting the prayers, hymns and talks of Hindu, Christian, Muslim and other religions is against the spirit of secularism. All the items such as Bhaktiranjani, Deveestuti, etc., broadcast in the morning flout the principle, policy and practice of democracy. Devoting the previous and peaceful morning time every day to religion which is entirely private and purely personal, is both glaring unjust and intolerably wasteful. There will be universal agreement that it is the tranquil time to instil scientific outlook, public-spirit, national integrity, significance of peace.

horrors of war, sense of sacrifice and social equality into the plastic minds of youths and to inspire them with the stories of freedom fighters and social reformers at national and international level. Before the dazzle of religious legends, all other items of social, secular and democratic value — few and far between — have faded out miserably. Different days are set apart for diverse creeds and duties. Sundays for songs about Jesus Christ, Mondays for the enology of Shiva and Shakti, Fridays for quotations from the Quran and Saturdays for panegyric Sanskrit verses upon Lord Venkateswara. What does it all point to? It is not a deliberate attempt to keep alive the old, out-dated, out-moded, un-human, anti-human, fantastic, religious tales? Is it not the highly objectionable use of one of the most modern inventions to stuff our minds with the worst fables?

The film songs and plays in the programme meant for workers; light music and led songs aimed at youths in 'Yuvavani'; and the lessons in cooking for women do not in any manner make for the mental and moral development of these categories of listeners.

Do we need a piously strong dose of sensuality, sexuality and obscenity during the fresh early hours of the day by way of the matutinal landation of gods and goddesses? Here is a sample of divine leevdness:

కందర్ప దర్పహర సుందర దివ్యమూర్తి
కాంతాకు చాంబురుహ కుట్మల లోలదృష్టి.

(Lord Venkateswara, so handsome as to humiliate the proud cupid, casts his lustful eyes on the lotus-bud-like nipples of his darling. Is there any piety or propriety in such a praise?)

Our constitution ordains and suggests that we should adopt human, rational and reformatory outlook. On the contrary the radio (Akasavani) dings into our ears obscene hymns and fills our minds with religious intoxication. During the Middle Ages religious bigots harassed, tortured, killed or burnt real scientists for their inventions and discoveries. But today do not hesitate to take unfair advantage of the scientific invention to propagate religion and unscientific ideas. All thinking people accept that it is an insult to human dignity and knowledge to broadcast lewd lauds, amorous songs and misleading, superstitious legends. The need of the hour, may the age, is to disseminate scientific knowledge, democratic principles and the spirit of human solidarity and oneness.

In rationality and respect,

Yours faithfully,

Secretary,

ANDHRA PRADESH RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION.

